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#### **Committee Assignments**

- Ways & Means, Ranking Republican
- International Trade & Economic Development
- Rules

#### **West Nile Virus**

With the weather getting nicer and mosquito season not far off, State Veterinarian Dr. Leonard Eldridge is advising horse owners to have their animals vaccinated against West Nile Virus. Last year, horses in Oregon and Idaho were infected. Horses being vaccinated for the first time will need two doses of the vaccine, three to six weeks apart. Horses vaccinated last year need only annual boosters. Humans, other animals and several species of birds can get the virus from mosquitoes, so all sources of stagnant, standing water – where mosquitoes breed – should be eliminated if possible.

# Sen. Joe Zarelli's UPDATE FROM OLYMPIA 3/25/05

Dear Friends,

Governor Christine Gregoire released her budget this week. With one month to go in the 2005 legislative session, we now have a starting point from which to negotiate and debate our state's future spending policies.

The governor's \$25.8 billion budget is an 11 percent increase over the previous biennium! This is in stark contrast to the Senate Republican budget of two years ago that only grew 3 percent over the previous two years. Her budget is unsustainable as it relies upon budget gimmicks and one-time savings.

In a previous update I talked about the good news of our state's most recent revenue forecast. This \$739 million projected increase in state revenues for the 2005-07 biennium should have resulted in a no-new-taxes budget proposal from our governor. However, it did not.

While Gov. Gregoire's budget does not raise the property tax, the business and occupation tax or the state sales tax, it does embrace a partial reinstatement of the "death tax" recently struck down by the Washington State Supreme Court. The governor tried to make her death tax proposal more palatable by exempting farms and only applying it to estates over \$2 million. I still think this is a bad idea. Death taxes are inherently unfair because the money a family earns has already been taxed! Why penalize heirs just because their parents or grandparents were successful?

The Senate Democrats are expected to release their budget proposal on Monday, March 28, with the House Democrats following closely behind with their spending plan. I am hoping we'll have better luck seeing a "no-new-taxes" budget from the Legislature.

Also, I wanted to let you know about HB 1049 which passed the Senate unanimously this week. The bill distributes \$155 million worth of low-interest loans throughout the state for public projects, especially for rural communities with limited access to resources. Often times, this money helps small cities and towns with upgrades to sewer and water systems.

As always, please contact my office with your questions or concerns. It is an honor representing you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

Sen. Joe Zarelli

#### **Help me save a stamp**

If you would like to receive this update via e-mail, please let me know! I take the spending of tax dollars very seriously. And while it is important for you to have this information, I want to be sure I'm saving money when and where I can, and an e-mail is cheaper than a stamp!